

2252-8

Parkwood Residents Association
10112 Wildwood Road
Kensington, MD 20895-4113

Alperon 08
cc: DPWT

January 6, 2008

Officer in Charge-BRAC
National Naval Medical Center
8901 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20889

On behalf of the Parkwood Residents Association, I am voicing a concern about the traffic study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in relation to the impending BRAC at National Naval Medical Center. The Parkwood subdivision in Kensington is comprised of 918 single family homes and is located northeast of the National Naval Medical Center, bounded on the east by Cedar Lane which becomes Summit Ave. At the request of the Parkwood Residents Association, Montgomery County in 1997 designated Cedar Lane a two lane road between Knowles Ave and Beach Dr to minimize speeding traffic on Cedar Lane and reduce cut-through traffic in our neighborhood.

One of the 27 intersections that was analyzed for the DEIS Appendix C-Transportation Study, that of Cedar Lane and Rockville Pike, is presently rated F for level of service at both the a.m. and p.m. peak periods, and will continue to be rated F after the projected increase in traffic due to this BRAC. According to figures from the DEIS, no increase in Cedar Lane traffic crossing Rockville Pike is foreseen in the next 4 years, but an increase of 24% is projected in the traffic turning right from northbound Rockville Pike to eastbound Cedar Lane (Fig 5a and Fig 21a). This traffic will impact Parkwood. Our area already has major back-ups from traffic heading east on Cedar Lane at the following intersections: Summit and Knowles Avenues, Knowles and Connecticut Avenues, Summit Ave and Plyers Mill Rd, and Plyers Mill Rd and Connecticut Ave.

We consider it a glaring oversight that these intersections were not included in the DEIS traffic study, since they have a major impact on Parkwood and the other neighborhoods adjoining Cedar Lane to the east of Rockville Pike. Given the anticipated impact on the Parkwood neighborhood, we ask the Navy to correct this oversight and determine what the present level of service is for these intersections, and what the level will be as a result of BRAC. ***The Parkwood community is opposed to the possibility that Cedar Lane, between Beach Drive and Summit, could be designated a four lane road to facilitate movement of traffic due to BRAC.***

While we recognize the need for a world-class hospital such as the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to provide essential care for our troops and veterans, ***we anticipate that the expansion of the National Naval Medical Center will have a profoundly negative effect on the quality of life for our neighborhood, primarily due to increased commuter traffic.***

We request that traffic mitigation and quality of life issues for the surrounding neighborhoods be a top priority as plans for this project move forward.

Sincerely



Kira K. Lueders
President, Parkwood Residents Association

Cc:
Senator Ben Cardin
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Congressman Chris Van Hollen
Lt. Governor Anthony Brown
State Senator Rich Madaleno
Montgomery County Executive Ike Legget
County Council District 5 Representative Valerie Ervin
Montgomery County BRAC Implementation Committee
Mayor Peter Fosselman, Town of Kensington

January 14, 2008

Officer in Charge-BRAC
National Naval Medical Center
8901 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20889

The DEIS states that the "NNMC site is favorably located in proximity to regional freeway and arterial facilities", which is true. It also observes there is "excessive congestion along these arterials", which is also true. The inescapable connection between these two observations is what concerns me. It is obvious this is a major problem with the BRAC in this already heavily developed urban area. The DEIS does very little to provide solutions for traffic problems it identifies, both those present and those created by the BRAC at this location. Two examples are as follows:

1. One intersection that is of particular interest to me is that at Cedar Lane and Rockville Pike. The DEIS identifies this intersection as presently having CLVs that merit a rating of F at both the a.m. and p.m. peaks. Because the CLV rating remains at F after the BRAC, it is implied that there is no detrimental effect on traffic, whereas common sense says otherwise. The proposed remedy for this intersection is to add lanes on Rockville Pike. I also question the projection that the number of cars on Cedar Lane that will cross Rockville Pike in 2011 will be the same as the number that crossed in 2007 (Fig. 5a and Fig. 21a in Appendix C-Transportation Study). Some of the planned improvements were recommended by the Bethesda Chevy Chase Master Plan in April 1990.
2. The DEIS reports that the Navy will "determine if traffic signal warranted at North Wood Rd. and Rockville Pike and suitable for submission of a request to state and local transport authorities for funding and implementation". How long will a study to determine if a traffic signal is warranted take? When will the study be done? What are the criteria to be used to determine if the signal is warranted? Is it realistic to expect funding from state and local transport authorities for this possible needed modification?

Some traffic data cited in the DEIS are attributed to a "Current" MSHA Traffic Trends Document that was published in 2005. Such outdated statistics are hardly useful considering the amount of development that has occurred in the last 2 to 3 years. Did the DEIS also take into account the considerable amount of development that is planned for Rockville Pike in the next 4 years?

The DEIS also states that the NNMC site has "easy access to mass transportation facilities". Although this is true for commuters traveling north and south where the Metro Red Line is available, travel in the east/west direction is less convenient. The only route to Silver Spring depends on bus service on the same clogged road (Jones Bridge Rd.) that is a problem for commuters in cars. The proposed Purple Line is a very long way from being a reality. Those living in Virginia have little choice but to commute by car. Commuters between Wheaton and NNMC are dependent on a Montgomery County Ride-On bus that stops service in early evening, an unrealistic choice for a hospital that has employees who have to travel at odd hours. The commuter parking lot proposed for the Capital Beltway/Connecticut Ave. interchange appears to be on the same property that WSSC plans to use for staging of pipeline construction, which is expected to last several years. Who owns that land now, and does the Navy have any assurance it will be available for the plan they propose?

In one part of the DEIS, there is an economic advantage cited for the BRAC due to the "increase in local employment of approximately 5515 short-term construction-related jobs" leading to an "increase in local sales volume of \$1,317,230,000 of which 39% is due to BRAC". It appears to be assumed that these construction workers are now living in Montgomery County, which is unlikely to be the case. In another part of the DEIS, it is stated that "construction crew commuting will be constrained by limiting parking spaces (currently 200 spaces)". Is it realistic to expect 96% of these workers to arrive on site by means other than cars? How was the projected large local sales volume value calculated? Is it assumed that all construction materials will be purchased locally, or that construction workers will eat in Bethesda restaurants?

NIH across Rockville Pike from the NNMCM has a Vehicle Inspection Station for trucks entering the NIH campus. Will a similar facility be built at NNMCM, and, if so, how will backups of traffic due to trucks entering NNMCM be avoided? How many trucks per day are anticipated to enter NNMCM during construction? How many are anticipated to enter after the Center is in full operation? Will Rockville Pike have been widened to the proposed 8 lanes before construction begins?

Telecommuting is one method discussed in the DEIS as a potential remedy to increased traffic problems. The DEIS needs to identify how many employees could participate in such a program. Would there be enough employees who could telecommute that it would have an impact on traffic?

It is very hard for me to see how this BRAC can be anything but a disaster for the traffic in the area where I have lived for the last 45 years. The Navy maintains that it is not responsible for what happens outside its fence, even though it affects both the residents of the area and those who will be working at NNMCM. With the budget constraints presently facing both the State of Maryland and Montgomery County, where are funds for traffic problem mitigation going to come from? The Transportation Management Plan as required by the National Capital Planning Commission needs to be developed now. Traffic congestion mitigation cannot wait until after construction due to BRAC has begun at the NNMCM.

Sincerely,



Kira K. Lueders
10112 Wildwood Rd
Kensington, MD 20895-4113
301-564-0263
kk1arl@yahoo.com

Cc:

Senator Ben Cardin
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Congressman Chris Van Hollen
State Senator Rich Madaleno
Montgomery County Executive Ike Legget
County Council District 5 Representative Valerie Ervin
Montgomery County BRAC Implementation Committee